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ABSTRACT

This brief paper offers an overview of strategies, with practical examples, to infuse multicultural content into the curriculum for gifted students. It proposes a framework for multicultural gifted education based on the four levels or approaches of J. Banks and C. Banks and within each approach, the six levels of B. Bloom's taxonomy. The four approaches are: (1) the contributions approach (focuses on contributions of various cultures); (2) the additive approach (adds content, concepts, themes, and perspectives of minority groups); (3) the transformational approach (attempts to help students view concepts, issues, events, and themes from the perspectives of minority groups; and (4) the social action approach (students make decisions on important social issues and take action to help solve them). Examples are given of learning activities for each of these approaches organized according to Bloom's taxonomy incorporating knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. (DB)

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Infusing Multicultural Content into the Curriculum for Gifted Students

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As classrooms become more and more culturally diverse, the need to infuse multicultural content into the curriculum becomes increasingly evident. This digest presents an overview of strategies with practical examples to meet the needs of students who are diverse in two ways – by ability and by ethnicity. It offers suggestions for promoting gifted education that is multicultural.

One way of integrating multicultural content into the curriculum involves four levels or approaches (Banks and Banks, 1993).

The *Contributions Approach* (level 1) focuses on heroes, holidays, and discrete elements and is the most extensively used approach to multiculturalism in the schools. In this approach, the traditional ethnocentric curriculum remains unchanged in its basic structure, goals, and salient characteristics. Cultural traditions, foods, music, and dance may be discussed, but little or no attention is given to their meaning and significance to minority groups.

The *Additive Approach* (level 2) adds content, concepts, themes, and perspectives of minority groups to the curriculum without changing its structure. For instance, teachers may add a book, unit, or course to the curriculum that focuses on diverse groups or topics. However, the students may not have the knowledge base to understand multicultural concepts, issues, and groups. Minority students learn little of their own history, and the rest of the students learn little of the history and contributions of other racial and cultural groups to American society.

The *Transformational Approach* (level three) involves changing the structure of the curriculum to enable students to view concepts, issues, events, and themes from the perspectives of minority groups. One now sees changes in the basic assumptions, goals, nature, and structure of the curriculum. According to Banks and Banks (1993), the curriculum should not focus on the ways that minority groups have contributed to mainstream society and culture; instead, it must focus on how the common U.S. culture and society emerged from a complex synthesis and interaction of the diverse cultural elements that make up the United States.

In the *Social Action Approach* (level four), students make decisions on important social issues and take action to help solve them. Students feel empowered and are proactive; they are provided with the knowledge, values, and skills necessary to participate in social change. Student self-examination becomes central in this approach through value analysis, decision making, problem solving, and social action experiences.

Multicultural Gifted Education: A Framework

One strategy for creating multicultural gifted education is to blend the works of Banks and Banks (1993) and Bloom (1956). This framework, described below, serves as a guide for helping educators promote higher level thinking based on Bloom's cognitive taxonomy (knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation) and to promote multicultural thinking based on the four levels presented by Banks and Banks (1993).

The lowest levels of both models (e.g., knowledge-contributions) involve fact-based questions, statements, and activities that do not promote higher level thinking or substantive multicultural experiences. Conversely, at the highest levels of both models (e.g., evaluation-social action), students think critically about and take action on multicultural topics, concepts, material, and events.

Here is an example of a lower level question contrasted with more complex multicultural questions: "Name three songs that were popular during slavery" (knowledge-contributions). In contrast, "Predict how our nation would have prospered without slave labor. What other forms of labor could have been used?" (analysis-transformation level).

The following outline illustrates the blending of multicultural and gifted education at all levels of Bloom's taxonomy, followed by an example of each type of student assignment. This outline can help educators to develop questions and learning experiences that are challenging, rigorous, and multicultural.

Contributions Approach

Knowledge: Students are taught and know facts about cultural artifacts, events, groups, and other cultural elements. *Example*: Name three songs that were popular among slaves.

Comprehension: Students show an understanding of information about cultural artifacts, groups, and other cultural elements. *Example*: Make an outline of events leading to the Civil War.

Application: Students are asked to and can apply information learned on cultural artifacts, events, and other cultural elements. *Example*: Create a model of the underground railroad.

Analysis: Students are taught to and can analyze (e.g., compare and contrast) information about cultural artifacts, groups, and other cultural elements. *Example*: Examine how stereotypes about minority groups might have contributed to slavery.

Synthesis: Students are required to and can create a new product from the information on cultural artifacts, groups, and other cultural elements. *Example*: Write a story about the contribution of Hispanic Americans to the music industry.

Evaluation: Students are taught to and can evaluate facts and information based on cultural artifacts, groups, and other cultural elements. *Example*: Critique the work of a famous American Indian artist.

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Additive Approach

Knowledge: Students are taught and know concepts and themes about cultural groups. *Example*: List three factors that contribute to prejudiced beliefs.

Comprehension: Students are taught and can understand cultural concepts and themes. *Example*: After reading a biography about a famous person of color, summarize the racial barriers that the person faced.

Application: Students are required to and can apply information learned about cultural concepts and themes. *Example*: Find a book or song that discusses the problems of racial prejudice in society.

Analysis: Students are taught to and can analyze important cultural concepts and themes. *Example*: Compare and contrast the writings of W.E.B. DuBois and Booker T. Washington on issues of racial discrimination.

Synthesis: Students are asked to and can synthesize important information on cultural concepts and themes. *Example*: Write a play about the Spanish Inquisition.

Evaluation: Students are taught to and can critique cultural concepts and themes. *Example*: Write a paper explaining why you think it is important (or not important) to learn about prejudice.

Transformation Approach

Knowledge: Students are given information on important cultural elements, groups, and other cultural elements, and can understand this information from different perspectives. *Example*: Describe how slaves might have felt being held in captivity.

Comprehension: Students are taught to understand and can demonstrate an understanding of important cultural concepts and themes from different perspectives. *Example*: Explain why American Indians use folk tales and storytelling as a means of coping with oppression.

Application: Students are asked to and can apply their understanding of important concepts and themes from different perspectives. *Example*: Read the essay "What America Means to Me." Write a paper showing how members of a minority group might respond to this essay.

Analysis: Students are taught to and can examine important cultural concepts and themes from more than one perspective. *Example*: Predict how our nation would have prospered without slave labor. What other forms of labor could have been used?

Synthesis: Students are required to and can create a product based on their new perspective or the perspective of another group. *Example*: Develop a survey regarding students' experiences with prejudice in their school or their community.

Evaluation: Students are taught to and can evaluate or judge important cultural concepts and themes from different viewpoints (e.g., minority group). *Example*: Assume the identity of a plantation owner or a slave. From that perspective, write a story outlining the differences between your life and the ideal of liberty and justice for all.

Social Action Approach

Knowledge: Based on information on cultural artifacts, etc., students make recommendations for social action. *Example*: What would you have done during the 17th century to end slavery?

Comprehension: Based on their understanding of important concepts and themes, students make recommendations for social action. *Example*: List some ways that the media contribute to our perceptions of minority groups. What can be done to improve how the media portray minorities?

Application: Students are asked to can apply their understanding of important social and cultural issues; they make recommendations for and take action on these issues. *Example*: Review three to five sources on affirmative action, then write and submit an editorial to a newspaper describing your views on this topic.

Analysis: Students are required to and can analyze social and cultural issues from different perspectives; they take action on these issues. *Example*: Spend a day (or more) observing and analyzing how minority groups are treated at the mall. Share the results with storeowners.

Synthesis: Students create a plan of action to address one or more social and cultural issues; they seek important social change. *Example*: Form a school club whose goal is to create a sense of community and respect in the school building.

Evaluation: Students critique important social and cultural issues and seek to make national and/or international change. *Example*: Examine school policies to see if democratic ideals are present. Write a new school policy and share the findings and recommendations with administration.

Summary and Conclusions

Students need to be prepared to live effectively in a diverse society and to be effective thinkers and problem solvers. Multicultural gifted education as outlined above promotes both goals.

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